Chapter XXIV

Wherein Mr Peter Magnus Grows Jealous, And The Middle-Aged Lady Apprehensive, Which Brings The Pickwickians Within The Grasp Of The Law

When Mr Pickwick descended to the room in which he and Mr Peter Magnus had spent the preceding evening, he found that gentleman with the major part of the contents of the two bags, the leathern hat-box, and the brown-paper parcel, displaying to all possible advantage on his person, while he himself was pacing up and down the room in a state of the utmost excitement and agitation.

'Good-morning, Sir,' said Mr Peter Magnus. 'What do you think of this, Sir?'

'Very effective indeed,' replied Mr Pickwick, surveying the garments of Mr Peter Magnus with a good-natured smile.

'Yes, I think it'll do,' said Mr Magnus. 'Mr Pickwick, Sir, I have sent up my card.'

'Have you?' said Mr Pickwick.

'And the waiter brought back word, that she would see me at eleven - at eleven, Sir; it only wants a quarter now.'

'Very near the time,' said Mr Pickwick.

'Yes, it is rather near,' replied Mr Magnus, 'rather too near to be pleasant - eh! Mr Pickwick, sir?'

'Confidence is a great thing in these cases,' observed Mr Pickwick.

'I believe it is, Sir,' said Mr Peter Magnus. 'I am very confident, Sir. Really, Mr Pickwick, I do not see why a man should feel any fear in such a case as this, sir. What is it, Sir? There's nothing to be ashamed of; it's a matter of mutual accommodation, nothing more. Husband on one side, wife on the other. That's my view of the matter, Mr Pickwick.'

'It is a very philosophical one,' replied Mr Pickwick. 'But breakfast is waiting, Mr Magnus. Come.'

Down they sat to breakfast, but it was evident, notwithstanding the boasting of Mr Peter Magnus, that he laboured under a very considerable degree of nervousness, of which loss of appetite, a propensity to upset the tea-things, a spectral attempt at drollery, and

an irresistible inclination to look at the clock, every other second, were among the principal symptoms.

'He-he-he,'tittered Mr Magnus, affecting cheerfulness, and gasping with agitation. 'It only wants two minutes, Mr Pickwick. Am I pale, Sir?' 'Not very,' replied Mr Pickwick.

There was a brief pause.

'I beg your pardon, Mr Pickwick; but have you ever done this sort of thing in your time?' said Mr Magnus.

'You mean proposing?' said Mr Pickwick. 'Yes.'

'Never,' said Mr Pickwick, with great energy, 'never.'

'You have no idea, then, how it's best to begin?' said Mr Magnus.

'Why,' said Mr Pickwick, 'I may have formed some ideas upon the subject, but, as I have never submitted them to the test of experience, I should be sorry if you were induced to regulate your proceedings by them.'

'I should feel very much obliged to you, for any advice, Sir,' said Mr Magnus, taking another look at the clock, the hand of which was verging on the five minutes past.

'Well, sir,' said Mr Pickwick, with the profound solemnity with which that great man could, when he pleased, render his remarks so deeply impressive. 'I should commence, sir, with a tribute to the lady's beauty and excellent qualities; from them, Sir, I should diverge to my own unworthiness.'

'Very good,' said Mr Magnus.

'Unworthiness for HER only, mind, sir,' resumed Mr Pickwick; 'for to show that I was not wholly unworthy, sir, I should take a brief review of my past life, and present condition. I should argue, by analogy, that to anybody else, I must be a very desirable object. I should then expatiate on the warmth of my love, and the depth of my devotion. Perhaps I might then be tempted to seize her hand.'

'Yes, I see,' said Mr Magnus; 'that would be a very great point.'

'I should then, Sir,' continued Mr Pickwick, growing warmer as the subject presented itself in more glowing colours before him - 'I should then, Sir, come to the plain and simple question, 'Will you have me?' I

think I am justified in assuming that upon this, she would turn away her head.'

'You think that may be taken for granted?' said Mr Magnus; 'because, if she did not do that at the right place, it would be embarrassing.'

'I think she would,' said Mr Pickwick. 'Upon this, sir, I should squeeze her hand, and I think - I think, Mr Magnus - that after I had done that, supposing there was no refusal, I should gently draw away the handkerchief, which my slight knowledge of human nature leads me to suppose the lady would be applying to her eyes at the moment, and steal a respectful kiss. I think I should kiss her, Mr Magnus; and at this particular point, I am decidedly of opinion that if the lady were going to take me at all, she would murmur into my ears a bashful acceptance.'

Mr Magnus started; gazed on Mr Pickwick's intelligent face, for a short time in silence; and then (the dial pointing to the ten minutes past) shook him warmly by the hand, and rushed desperately from the room.

Mr Pickwick had taken a few strides to and fro; and the small hand of the clock following the latter part of his example, had arrived at the figure which indicates the half-hour, when the door suddenly opened. He turned round to meet Mr Peter Magnus, and encountered, in his stead, the joyous face of Mr Tupman, the serene countenance of Mr Winkle, and the intellectual lineaments of Mr Snodgrass. As Mr Pickwick greeted them, Mr Peter Magnus tripped into the room.

'My friends, the gentleman I was speaking of - Mr Magnus,' said Mr Pickwick.

'Your servant, gentlemen,' said Mr Magnus, evidently in a high state of excitement; 'Mr Pickwick, allow me to speak to you one moment, sir.'

As he said this, Mr Magnus harnessed his forefinger to Mr Pickwick's buttonhole, and, drawing him to a window recess, said -

'Congratulate me, Mr Pickwick; I followed your advice to the very letter.'

'And it was all correct, was it?' inquired Mr Pickwick.

'It was, Sir. Could not possibly have been better,' replied Mr Magnus. 'Mr Pickwick, she is mine.'

'I congratulate you, with all my heart,' replied Mr Pickwick, warmly shaking his new friend by the hand.

'You must see her. Sir,' said Mr Magnus; 'this way, if you please. Excuse us for one instant, gentlemen.' Hurrying on in this way, Mr Peter Magnus drew Mr Pickwick from the room. He paused at the next door in the passage, and tapped gently thereat.

'Come in,' said a female voice. And in they went.

'Miss Witherfield,' said Mr Magnus, 'allow me to introduce my very particular friend, Mr Pickwick. Mr Pickwick, I beg to make you known to Miss Witherfield.'

The lady was at the upper end of the room. As Mr Pickwick bowed, he took his spectacles from his waistcoat pocket, and put them on; a process which he had no sooner gone through, than, uttering an exclamation of surprise, Mr Pickwick retreated several paces, and the lady, with a half-suppressed scream, hid her face in her hands, and dropped into a chair; whereupon Mr Peter Magnus was stricken motionless on the spot, and gazed from one to the other, with a countenance expressive of the extremities of horror and surprise. This certainly was, to all appearance, very unaccountable behaviour; but the fact is, that Mr Pickwick no sooner put on his spectacles, than he at once recognised in the future Mrs. Magnus the lady into whose room he had so unwarrantably intruded on the previous night; and the spectacles had no sooner crossed Mr Pickwick's nose, than the lady at once identified the countenance which she had seen surrounded by all the horrors of a nightcap. So the lady screamed, and Mr Pickwick started.

'Mr Pickwick!' exclaimed Mr Magnus, lost in astonishment, 'what is the meaning of this, Sir? What is the meaning of it, Sir?' added Mr Magnus, in a threatening, and a louder tone.

'Sir,' said Mr Pickwick, somewhat indignant at the very sudden manner in which Mr Peter Magnus had conjugated himself into the imperative mood, 'I decline answering that question.'

'You decline it, Sir?' said Mr Magnus.

'I do, Sir,' replied Mr Pickwick; 'I object to say anything which may compromise that lady, or awaken unpleasant recollections in her breast, without her consent and permission.'

'Miss Witherfield,' said Mr Peter Magnus, 'do you know this person?'

'Know him!' repeated the middle-aged lady, hesitating.

'Yes, know him, ma'am; I said know him,' replied Mr Magnus, with ferocity.

'I have seen him,' replied the middle-aged lady.

'Where?' inquired Mr Magnus, 'where?'

'That,' said the middle-aged lady, rising from her seat, and averting her head - 'that I would not reveal for worlds.'

'I understand you, ma'am,' said Mr Pickwick, 'and respect your delicacy; it shall never be revealed by ME depend upon it.'

'Upon my word, ma'am,' said Mr Magnus, 'considering the situation in which I am placed with regard to yourself, you carry this matter off with tolerable coolness - tolerable coolness, ma'am.'

'Cruel Mr Magnus!' said the middle-aged lady; here she wept very copiously indeed.

'Address your observations to me, sir,' interposed Mr Pickwick; 'I alone am to blame, if anybody be.'

'Oh! you alone are to blame, are you, sir?' said Mr Magnus; 'I - I - see through this, sir. You repent of your determination now, do you?'

'My determination!' said Mr Pickwick.

'Your determination, Sir. Oh! don't stare at me, Sir,' said Mr Magnus; 'I recollect your words last night, Sir. You came down here, sir, to expose the treachery and falsehood of an individual on whose truth and honour you had placed implicit reliance - eh?' Here Mr Peter Magnus indulged in a prolonged sneer; and taking off his green spectacles - which he probably found superfluous in his fit of jealousy - rolled his little eyes about, in a manner frightful to behold.

'Eh?' said Mr Magnus; and then he repeated the sneer with increased effect. 'But you shall answer it, Sir.'

'Answer what?' said Mr Pickwick.

'Never mind, sir,' replied Mr Magnus, striding up and down the room. 'Never mind.'

There must be something very comprehensive in this phrase of 'Never mind,' for we do not recollect to have ever witnessed a quarrel in the street, at a theatre, public room, or elsewhere, in which it has not been the standard reply to all belligerent inquiries. 'Do you call yourself a gentleman, sir?' - 'Never mind, sir.' 'Did I offer to say anything to the young woman, sir?' - 'Never mind, sir.' 'Do you want your head knocked up against that wall, sir?' - 'Never mind, sir.' It is

observable, too, that there would appear to be some hidden taunt in this universal 'Never mind,' which rouses more indignation in the bosom of the individual addressed, than the most lavish abuse could possibly awaken.

We do not mean to assert that the application of this brevity to himself, struck exactly that indignation to Mr Pickwick's soul, which it would infallibly have roused in a vulgar breast. We merely record the fact that Mr Pickwick opened the room door, and abruptly called out, 'Tupman, come here!'

Mr Tupman immediately presented himself, with a look of very considerable surprise.

'Tupman,' said Mr Pickwick, 'a secret of some delicacy, in which that lady is concerned, is the cause of a difference which has just arisen between this gentleman and myself. When I assure him, in your presence, that it has no relation to himself, and is not in any way connected with his affairs, I need hardly beg you to take notice that if he continue to dispute it, he expresses a doubt of my veracity, which I shall consider extremely insulting.' As Mr Pickwick said this, he looked encyclopedias at Mr Peter Magnus.

Mr Pickwick's upright and honourable bearing, coupled with that force and energy of speech which so eminently distinguished him, would have carried conviction to any reasonable mind; but, unfortunately, at that particular moment, the mind of Mr Peter Magnus was in anything but reasonable order. Consequently, instead of receiving Mr Pickwick's explanation as he ought to have done, he forthwith proceeded to work himself into a red- hot, scorching, consuming passion, and to talk about what was due to his own feelings, and all that sort of thing; adding force to his declamation by striding to and fro, and pulling his hair - amusements which he would vary occasionally, by shaking his fist in Mr Pickwick's philanthropic countenance.

Mr Pickwick, in his turn, conscious of his own innocence and rectitude, and irritated by having unfortunately involved the middle-aged lady in such an unpleasant affair, was not so quietly disposed as was his wont. The consequence was, that words ran high, and voices higher; and at length Mr Magnus told Mr Pickwick he should hear from him; to which Mr Pickwick replied, with laudable politeness, that the sooner he heard from him the better; whereupon the middle-aged lady rushed in terror from the room, out of which Mr Tupman dragged Mr Pickwick, leaving Mr Peter Magnus to himself and meditation.

If the middle-aged lady had mingled much with the busy world, or had profited at all by the manners and customs of those who make the laws and set the fashions, she would have known that this sort of

ferocity is the most harmless thing in nature; but as she had lived for the most part in the country, and never read the parliamentary debates, she was little versed in these particular refinements of civilised life. Accordingly, when she had gained her bedchamber, bolted herself in, and began to meditate on the scene she had just witnessed, the most terrific pictures of slaughter and destruction presented themselves to her imagination; among which, a full-length portrait of Mr Peter Magnus borne home by four men, with the embellishment of a whole barrelful of bullets in his left side, was among the very least. The more the middle-aged lady meditated, the more terrified she became; and at length she determined to repair to the house of the principal magistrate of the town, and request him to secure the persons of Mr Pickwick and Mr Tupman without delay.

To this decision the middle-aged lady was impelled by a variety of considerations, the chief of which was the incontestable proof it would afford of her devotion to Mr Peter Magnus, and her anxiety for his safety. She was too well acquainted with his jealous temperament to venture the slightest allusion to the real cause of her agitation on beholding Mr Pickwick; and she trusted to her own influence and power of persuasion with the little man, to quell his boisterous jealousy, supposing that Mr Pickwick were removed, and no fresh quarrel could arise. Filled with these reflections, the middle-aged lady arrayed herself in her bonnet and shawl, and repaired to the mayor's dwelling straightway.

Now George Nupkins, Esquire, the principal magistrate aforesaid, was as grand a personage as the fastest walker would find out, between sunrise and sunset, on the twenty-first of June, which being, according to the almanacs, the longest day in the whole year, would naturally afford him the longest period for his search. On this particular morning, Mr Nupkins was in a state of the utmost excitement and irritation, for there had been a rebellion in the town; all the day-scholars at the largest day- school had conspired to break the windows of an obnoxious apple-seller, and had hooted the beadle and pelted the constabulary - an elderly gentleman in top-boots, who had been called out to repress the tumult, and who had been a peace-officer, man and boy, for half a century at least. And Mr Nupkins was sitting in his easy-chair, frowning with majesty, and boiling with rage, when a lady was announced on pressing, private, and particular business. Mr Nupkins looked calmly terrible, and commanded that the lady should be shown in; which command, like all the mandates of emperors, and magistrates, and other great potentates of the earth, was forthwith obeyed; and Miss Witherfield, interestingly agitated, was ushered in accordingly.

'Muzzle!' said the magistrate.

Muzzle was an undersized footman, with a long body and short legs.

'Muzzle!' 'Yes, your Worship.'

'Place a chair, and leave the room.'

'Yes, your Worship.'

'Now, ma'am, will you state your business?' said the magistrate.

'It is of a very painful kind, Sir,' said Miss Witherfield.

'Very likely, ma'am,' said the magistrate. 'Compose your feelings, ma'am.' Here Mr Nupkins looked benignant. 'And then tell me what legal business brings you here, ma'am.' Here the magistrate triumphed over the man; and he looked stern again.

'It is very distressing to me, Sir, to give this information,' said Miss Witherfield, 'but I fear a duel is going to be fought here.'

'Here, ma'am?' said the magistrate. 'Where, ma'am?'

'In Ipswich.' 'In Ipswich, ma'am! A duel in Ipswich!' said the magistrate, perfectly aghast at the notion. 'Impossible, ma'am; nothing of the kind can be contemplated in this town, I am persuaded. Bless my soul, ma'am, are you aware of the activity of our local magistracy? Do you happen to have heard, ma'am, that I rushed into a prize-ring on the fourth of May last, attended by only sixty special constables; and, at the hazard of falling a sacrifice to the angry passions of an infuriated multitude, prohibited a pugilistic contest between the Middlesex Dumpling and the Suffolk Bantam? A duel in Ipswich, ma'am? I don't think - I do not think,' said the magistrate, reasoning with himself, 'that any two men can have had the hardihood to plan such a breach of the peace, in this town.'

'My information is, unfortunately, but too correct,' said the middle-aged lady; 'I was present at the quarrel.'

'It's a most extraordinary thing,' said the astounded magistrate. 'Muzzle!'

'Yes, your Worship.'

'Send Mr Jinks here, directly! Instantly.'

'Yes, your Worship.'

Muzzle retired; and a pale, sharp-nosed, half-fed, shabbily- clad clerk, of middle age, entered the room.

'Mr Jinks,' said the magistrate. 'Mr Jinks.'

'Sir,' said Mr Jinks. 'This lady, Mr Jinks, has come here, to give information of an intended duel in this town.'

Mr Jinks, not knowing exactly what to do, smiled a dependent's smile.

'What are you laughing at, Mr Jinks?' said the magistrate.

Mr Jinks looked serious instantly.

'Mr Jinks,' said the magistrate, 'you're a fool.'

Mr Jinks looked humbly at the great man, and bit the top of his pen.

'You may see something very comical in this information, Sir - but I can tell you this, Mr Jinks, that you have very little to laugh at,' said the magistrate.

The hungry-looking Jinks sighed, as if he were quite aware of the fact of his having very little indeed to be merry about; and, being ordered to take the lady's information, shambled to a seat, and proceeded to write it down.

'This man, Pickwick, is the principal, I understand?' said the magistrate, when the statement was finished.

'He is,' said the middle-aged lady.

'And the other rioter - what's his name, Mr Jinks?'

'Tupman, Sir.' 'Tupman is the second?'

'Yes.'

'The other principal, you say, has absconded, ma'am?'

'Yes,' replied Miss Witherfield, with a short cough.

'Very well,' said the magistrate. 'These are two cut-throats from London, who have come down here to destroy his Majesty's population, thinking that at this distance from the capital, the arm of the law is weak and paralysed. They shall be made an example of. Draw up the warrants, Mr Jinks. Muzzle!'

'Yes, your Worship.'

'Is Grummer downstairs?'

'Yes, your Worship.'

'Send him up.' The obsequious Muzzle retired, and presently returned, introducing the elderly gentleman in the top-boots, who was chiefly remarkable for a bottle-nose, a hoarse voice, a snuff- coloured surtout, and a wandering eye.

'Grummer,' said the magistrate.

'Your Wash-up.'

'Is the town quiet now?'

'Pretty well, your Wash-up,' replied Grummer. 'Pop'lar feeling has in a measure subsided, consekens o' the boys having dispersed to cricket.'

'Nothing but vigorous measures will do in these times, Grummer,' said the magistrate, in a determined manner. 'if the authority of the king's officers is set at naught, we must have the riot act read. If the civil power cannot protect these windows, Grummer, the military must protect the civil power, and the windows too. I believe that is a maxim of the constitution, Mr Jinks?' 'Certainly, sir,' said Jinks.

'Very good,' said the magistrate, signing the warrants. 'Grummer, you will bring these persons before me, this afternoon. You will find them at the Great White Horse. You recollect the case of the Middlesex Dumpling and the Suffolk Bantam, Grummer?'

Mr Grummer intimated, by a retrospective shake of the head, that he should never forget it - as indeed it was not likely he would, so long as it continued to be cited daily. 'This is even more unconstitutional,' said the magistrate; 'this is even a greater breach of the peace, and a grosser infringement of his Majesty's prerogative. I believe duelling is one of his Majesty's most undoubted prerogatives, Mr Jinks?'

'Expressly stipulated in Magna Charta, sir,' said Mr Jinks.

'One of the brightest jewels in the British crown, wrung from his Majesty by the barons, I believe, Mr Jinks?' said the magistrate.

'Just so, Sir,' replied Mr Jinks.

'Very well,' said the magistrate, drawing himself up proudly, 'it shall not be violated in this portion of his dominions. Grummer, procure

assistance, and execute these warrants with as little delay as possible. Muzzle!'

'Yes, your Worship.'

'Show the lady out.'

Miss Witherfield retired, deeply impressed with the magistrate's learning and research; Mr Nupkins retired to lunch; Mr Jinks retired within himself - that being the only retirement he had, except the sofa-bedstead in the small parlour which was occupied by his landlady's family in the daytime - and Mr Grummer retired, to wipe out, by his mode of discharging his present commission, the insult which had been fastened upon himself, and the other representative of his Majesty - the beadle - in the course of the morning.

While these resolute and determined preparations for the conservation of the king's peace were pending, Mr Pickwick and his friends, wholly unconscious of the mighty events in progress, had sat quietly down to dinner; and very talkative and companionable they all were. Mr Pickwick was in the very act of relating his adventure of the preceding night, to the great amusement of his followers, Mr Tupman especially, when the door opened, and a somewhat forbidding countenance peeped into the room. The eyes in the forbidding countenance looked very earnestly at Mr Pickwick, for several seconds, and were to all appearance satisfied with their investigation; for the body to which the forbidding countenance belonged, slowly brought itself into the apartment, and presented the form of an elderly individual in top-boots - not to keep the reader any longer in suspense, in short, the eyes were the wandering eyes of Mr Grummer, and the body was the body of the same gentleman.

Mr Grummer's mode of proceeding was professional, but peculiar. His first act was to bolt the door on the inside; his second, to polish his head and countenance very carefully with a cotton handkerchief; his third, to place his hat, with the cotton handkerchief in it, on the nearest chair; and his fourth, to produce from the breast-pocket of his coat a short truncheon, surmounted by a brazen crown, with which he beckoned to Mr Pickwick with a grave and ghost-like air.

Mr Snodgrass was the first to break the astonished silence. He looked steadily at Mr Grummer for a brief space, and then said emphatically, 'This is a private room, Sir. A private room.'

Mr Grummer shook his head, and replied, 'No room's private to his Majesty when the street door's once passed. That's law. Some people maintains that an Englishman's house is his castle. That's gammon.'

The Pickwickians gazed on each other with wondering eyes.

'Which is Mr Tupman?' inquired Mr Grummer. He had an intuitive perception of Mr Pickwick; he knew him at once.

'My name's Tupman,' said that gentleman.

'My name's Law,' said Mr Grummer.

'What?' said Mr Tupman.

'Law,' replied Mr Grummer - 'Law, civil power, and exekative; them's my titles; here's my authority. Blank Tupman, blank Pickwick - against the peace of our sufferin' lord the king - stattit in the case made and purwided - and all regular. I apprehend you Pickwick! Tupman - the aforesaid.'

'What do you mean by this insolence?' said Mr Tupman, starting up; 'leave the room!'

'Hollo,' said Mr Grummer, retreating very expeditiously to the door, and opening it an inch or two, 'Dubbley.'

'Well,' said a deep voice from the passage.

'Come for'ard, Dubbley.'

At the word of command, a dirty-faced man, something over six feet high, and stout in proportion, squeezed himself through the half-open door (making his face very red in the process), and entered the room.

'Is the other specials outside, Dubbley?' inquired Mr Grummer.

Mr Dubbley, who was a man of few words, nodded assent.

'Order in the diwision under your charge, Dubbley,' said Mr Grummer.

Mr Dubbley did as he was desired; and half a dozen men, each with a short truncheon and a brass crown, flocked into the room. Mr Grummer pocketed his staff, and looked at Mr Dubbley; Mr Dubbley pocketed his staff and looked at the division; the division pocketed their staves and looked at Messrs. Tupman and Pickwick.

Mr Pickwick and his followers rose as one man.

'What is the meaning of this atrocious intrusion upon my privacy?' said Mr Pickwick.

'Who dares apprehend me?' said Mr Tupman.

'What do you want here, scoundrels?' said Mr Snodgrass.

Mr Winkle said nothing, but he fixed his eyes on Grummer, and bestowed a look upon him, which, if he had had any feeling, must have pierced his brain. As it was, however, it had no visible effect on him whatever.

When the executive perceived that Mr Pickwick and his friends were disposed to resist the authority of the law, they very significantly turned up their coat sleeves, as if knocking them down in the first instance, and taking them up afterwards, were a mere professional act which had only to be thought of to be done, as a matter of course. This demonstration was not lost upon Mr Pickwick. He conferred a few moments with Mr Tupman apart, and then signified his readiness to proceed to the mayor's residence, merely begging the parties then and there assembled, to take notice, that it was his firm intention to resent this monstrous invasion of his privileges as an Englishman, the instant he was at liberty; whereat the parties then and there assembled laughed very heartily, with the single exception of Mr Grummer, who seemed to consider that any slight cast upon the divine right of magistrates was a species of blasphemy not to be tolerated.

But when Mr Pickwick had signified his readiness to bow to the laws of his country, and just when the waiters, and hostlers, and chambermaids, and post-boys, who had anticipated a delightful commotion from his threatened obstinacy, began to turn away, disappointed and disgusted, a difficulty arose which had not been foreseen. With every sentiment of veneration for the constituted authorities, Mr Pickwick resolutely protested against making his appearance in the public streets, surrounded and guarded by the officers of justice, like a common criminal. Mr Grummer, in the then disturbed state of public feeling (for it was half-holiday, and the boys had not yet gone home), as resolutely protested against walking on the opposite side of the way, and taking Mr Pickwick's parole that he would go straight to the magistrate's; and both Mr Pickwick and Mr Tupman as strenuously objected to the expense of a post-coach, which was the only respectable conveyance that could be obtained. The dispute ran high, and the dilemma lasted long; and just as the executive were on the point of overcoming Mr Pickwick's objection to walking to the magistrate's, by the trite expedient of carrying him thither, it was recollected that there stood in the inn yard, an old sedan-chair, which, having been originally built for a gouty gentleman with funded property, would hold Mr Pickwick and Mr Tupman, at least as conveniently as a modern post- chaise. The chair was hired, and brought into the hall; Mr Pickwick and Mr Tupman squeezed

themselves inside, and pulled down the blinds; a couple of chairmen were speedily found; and the procession started in grand order. The specials surrounded the body of the vehicle; Mr Grummer and Mr Dubbley marched triumphantly in front; Mr Snodgrass and Mr Winkle walked arm-in-arm behind; and the unsoaped of Ipswich brought up the rear.

The shopkeepers of the town, although they had a very indistinct notion of the nature of the offence, could not but be much edified and gratified by this spectacle. Here was the strong arm of the law, coming down with twenty gold-beater force, upon two offenders from the metropolis itself; the mighty engine was directed by their own magistrate, and worked by their own officers; and both the criminals, by their united efforts, were securely shut up, in the narrow compass of one sedan-chair. Many were the expressions of approval and admiration which greeted Mr Grummer, as he headed the cavalcade, staff in hand; loud and long were the shouts raised by the unsoaped; and amidst these united testimonials of public approbation, the procession moved slowly and majestically along.

Mr Weller, habited in his morning jacket, with the black calico sleeves, was returning in a rather desponding state from an unsuccessful survey of the mysterious house with the green gate, when, raising his eyes, he beheld a crowd pouring down the street, surrounding an object which had very much the appearance of a sedan-chair. Willing to divert his thoughts from the failure of his enterprise, he stepped aside to see the crowd pass; and finding that they were cheering away, very much to their own satisfaction, forthwith began (by way of raising his spirits) to cheer too, with all his might and main.

Mr Grummer passed, and Mr Dubbley passed, and the sedan passed, and the bodyguard of specials passed, and Sam was still responding to the enthusiastic cheers of the mob, and waving his hat about as if he were in the very last extreme of the wildest joy (though, of course, he had not the faintest idea of the matter in hand), when he was suddenly stopped by the unexpected appearance of Mr Winkle and Mr Snodgrass.

'What's the row, gen'l'm'n?'cried Sam. 'Who have they got in this here watch-box in mournin'?'

Both gentlemen replied together, but their words were lost in the tumult.

'Who is it?' cried Sam again.

once more was a joint reply returned; and, though the words were inaudible, Sam saw by the motion of the two pairs of lips that they had uttered the magic word 'Pickwick.'

This was enough. In another minute Mr Weller had made his way through the crowd, stopped the chairmen, and confronted the portly Grummer.

'Hollo, old gen'l'm'n!' said Sam. 'Who have you got in this here conweyance?'

'Stand back,' said Mr Grummer, whose dignity, like the dignity of a great many other men, had been wondrously augmented by a little popularity.

'Knock him down, if he don't,' said Mr Dubbley.

'I'm wery much obliged to you, old gen'l'm'n,' replied Sam, 'for consulting my conwenience, and I'm still more obliged to the other gen'l'm'n, who looks as if he'd just escaped from a giant's carrywan, for his wery 'andsome suggestion; but I should prefer your givin' me a answer to my question, if it's all the same to you. - How are you, Sir?' This last observation was addressed with a patronising air to Mr Pickwick, who was peeping through the front window.

Mr Grummer, perfectly speechless with indignation, dragged the truncheon with the brass crown from its particular pocket, and flourished it before Sam's eyes.

'Ah,' said Sam, 'it's wery pretty, 'specially the crown, which is uncommon like the real one.'

'Stand back!' said the outraged Mr Grummer. By way of adding force to the command, he thrust the brass emblem of royalty into Sam's neckcloth with one hand, and seized Sam's collar with the other - a compliment which Mr Weller returned by knocking him down out of hand, having previously with the utmost consideration, knocked down a chairman for him to lie upon.

Whether Mr Winkle was seized with a temporary attack of that species of insanity which originates in a sense of injury, or animated by this display of Mr Weller's valour, is uncertain; but certain it is, that he no sooner saw Mr Grummer fall than he made a terrific onslaught on a small boy who stood next him; whereupon Mr Snodgrass, in a truly Christian spirit, and in order that he might take no one unawares, announced in a very loud tone that he was going to begin, and proceeded to take off his coat with the utmost deliberation. He was immediately surrounded and secured; and it is but common justice

both to him and Mr Winkle to say, that they did not make the slightest attempt to rescue either themselves or Mr Weller; who, after a most vigorous resistance, was overpowered by numbers and taken prisoner. The procession then reformed; the chairmen resumed their stations; and the march was re-commenced.

Mr Pickwick's indignation during the whole of this proceeding was beyond all bounds. He could just see Sam upsetting the specials, and flying about in every direction; and that was all he could see, for the sedan doors wouldn't open, and the blinds wouldn't pull up. At length, with the assistance of Mr Tupman, he managed to push open the roof; and mounting on the seat, and steadying himself as well as he could, by placing his hand on that gentleman's shoulder, Mr Pickwick proceeded to address the multitude; to dwell upon the unjustifiable manner in which he had been treated; and to call upon them to take notice that his servant had been first assaulted. In this order they reached the magistrate's house; the chairmen trotting, the prisoners following, Mr Pickwick oratorising, and the crowd shouting.